

Le Grand’s
Martinez named
Bulldogs’ new head
football coach 1B



Probe concludes
into claims of
misconduct by
state senator 4A



VOLUME 129, No. 312
STAY CONNECTED [MERCEDSUNSTAR.COM](#)

[FACEBOOK.COM/MERCEDSUNSTAR](#)
[TWITTER.COM/MERCEDSUNSTAR](#)

NEWS ALL DAY.
[YOUR WAY.](#)

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 17 2018

\$2 Sunny, clear
67°/41° See 10B

MERCED SUN-STAR

Russians indicted,
accused of 2016
election meddling

BY SHARON LAFRANIERE
New York Times

WASHINGTON

The special counsel investigating Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election charged 13 Russian nationals and three Russian organizations Friday with illegally trying to disrupt the U.S. political process, including efforts designed to boost the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump and hurt that of his opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The indictment represents the first charges by the special counsel, Robert Mueller, for meddling in the 2016 presi-



Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein announces on Friday that a grand jury has accused 13 Russian nationals and several Russian entities of violating U.S. criminal laws to interfere with U.S. elections.

JACQUELYN MARTIN AP

SEE RUSSIA PROBE, 7A

County’s
annual
education
report
released

BY VIKAAAS SHANKER
vshanker@mercedsunstar.com

English-learning students in Merced County who successfully became English proficient generally ended up among the best performing students in the state, according to the Merced County Office of Education’s annual education report unveiled Thursday.

“These students are showing they’re doing much better,” MCOE spokesman Nathan Quevedo said, adding that it was one of several notable outcomes officials noticed while combing over state data.

The annual report this year focused on educating the public about the county’s early childhood education programs. The report provides an update on Merced County’s school districts, including student achievement and demographics.

Here are some of the numbers.

Graduation rates for the county’s districts with high schools for the 2015-16 school year are:

- Los Banos Unified: 95.5 percent
- Hilmar Unified: 95.4
- Delhi Unified: 95.1
- Dos Palos-Oro Loma Joint Unified: 94.2
- Gustine Unified: 93.8
- Merced Union: 91.1
- Le Grand Union: 90.2
- Merced County Average (includes special education programs): 89.1

The numbers are up from 2010, when the average graduation rate in Merced County was more than 78 percent, according to the report’s analysis of the Department of Education data.

Here’s the percentage of students in each district classified as English learners.

- El Nido Elementary: 67.7 percent

Steve Tietjen



MOURNING SLAIN CLASSMATES

Students gather Friday at a memorial at Pine Trails Park in Parkland, Fla., where 17 memorial crosses were placed in honor of the victims of the Wednesday shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Read more about the aftermath of the massacre. 6A

Merced SNAP recipients won’t benefit
under Trump proposal, officials say

BY MONICA VELEZ
mvelez@mercedsunstar.com

The Trump administration’s proposed budget for next year could bring major slashes in funding and tighter regulations to one of the largest food assistance programs in the country that tens of thousands in Merced County depend on.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP – known as CalFresh in California and formerly known as food stamps – allows about 54,000

people in Merced County a monthly budget for groceries, ranging from meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, bread, ice cream and more.

In the president’s proposed budget for the 2019 federal fiscal year released this week, nearly 30 percent of the program funding could be decreased over the span of 10 years, according to the California Budget and Policy Center, an independent organization focused on analyzing how policies affect low- and middle-income families in the state.

The proposed budget cuts about \$213 billion from the program, which would create more gaps in food sources for low-income people across the county and country, said Esi Hutchful, state policy fellow for the California Budget and Policy Center.

People in Merced County rely on SNAP to meet their needs and slicing the funding will put a bigger burden on organizations like food banks and food pantries, said Bill Gibbs, executive director of the Merced County Food Bank.

“WE’RE ALREADY STRAPPED TO MEET THE CURRENT UNMET NEEDS. REDUCING MONEY IS GOING TO CREATE BIGGER NEEDS WE’RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO ABSORB.”

Bill Gibbs, executive director of Merced County Food Bank

“We’re already strapped to meet the current unmet needs,” Gibbs said. “Reducing money is

going to create bigger needs we’re not going to be able to absorb.”

In Los Banos about 7,800 people are on CalFresh and about about 24,500 people in Merced utilize the program, according to data from the Merced County Human Services Agency.

The types of food and the way CalFresh recipients receive their food could also change if the budget proposal is passed by congress.

As of now, SNAP recipients receive Electronic Benefits Transfer cards that are loaded with money each month to purchase groceries. The administration proposed to get rid of

SEE SNAP FUNDING, 7A

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To subscribe or report delivery issues,
800-540-4200 or [mercedsunstar.com/customer-service](#)

Comics 6B, Inside
Community 7B
Entertainment 5B

Lottery
Obituaries
Opinion

2A
8A
9A

Puzzles
Sports
Weather

6B
1B
10B

